

Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation  
Water Resources Division  
Water Rights Bureau

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**  
**For Routine Actions with Limited Environmental Impact**

**Part I. Proposed Action Description**

1. Applicant/Contact name and address: Northwest Properties LLC, 17 Blueberry Lane, Heron, MT 59844
2. Type of action: Provisional Permit to Appropriate Water 76N 30027981
3. Water source name: Two Groundwater Wells
4. Location affected by project: NW¼ NW¼ NE¼, Section 1, Twp. 21N, Rge 30W, Sanders County.
5. Narrative summary of the proposed project, purpose, action to be taken, and benefits:  

The DNRC shall issue a water use permit if an applicant proves the criteria in 85-2-311 MCA are met.

 The applicant is seeking a water use permit to use two wells for multiple domestic and lawn and garden use in an approved Sanders County Subdivision. The subdivision is located in portions of the NE¼ and Gov't Lot 3 of Section 1, Township 21 North, Range 30 West, Sanders County and will consist of 60-lots. Water to supply the subdivision will come from two wells drilled to 183.5-feet and 284.6-feet. The scope of this EA will focus mainly on the water use from these two wells to identify impacts, if any, from this requested action. Environmental review information as well as identified impacts for the overall subdivision can be found in the final plat approval located with the Sanders County Commissioners Planning and Zoning Office. Within the subdivision water will be used to irrigate 6.89-acres and serve 60-lots. The water use permit is a critical element to the success of the subdivision and is a significant benefit to the appropriator.
6. Agencies consulted during preparation of the Environmental Assessment:  
 (include agencies with overlapping jurisdiction)

Montana Historical Society  
Montana Natural Heritage Program  
Montana Department of Environmental Quality

**Part II. Environmental Review**

**1. Environmental Impact Checklist:**

**PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**

**WATER QUANTITY, QUALITY AND DISTRIBUTION**

**Water quantity** - Assess whether the source of supply is identified as a chronically or periodically dewatered stream by DFWP. Assess whether the proposed use will worsen the already dewatered condition.

*Determination:* Not applicable, the source is groundwater

**Water quality** - Assess whether the stream is listed as water quality impaired or threatened by DEQ, and whether the proposed project will affect water quality.

*Determination:* Not applicable, the source is groundwater

**Groundwater** - Assess if the proposed project impacts ground water quality or supply. If this is a groundwater appropriation, assess if it could impact adjacent surface water flows.

*Determination:* A hydro geologic review of the aquifer testing data by DNRC Water Management Bureau identifies the source aquifer as “locally confined” and overlain by materials of limited spatial extent through and around which leakage can occur and which is ultimately hydraulically-connected to shallow water bearing alluvium and surface water. The potential for stream depletion does exist but actual environmental impact is minor.

**DIVERSION WORKS** - Assess whether the means of diversion, construction and operation of the appropriation works of the proposed project will impact any of the following: channel impacts, flow modifications, barriers, riparian areas, dams, well construction.

*Determination:* Two variable speed pumps will be used to deliver water to the subdivision. A Grundfos Model 150S150-6 pump or equal will be installed in both wells. The pump will be capable of producing 129 gpm at 360-feet of total dynamic head, with a minimum efficiency of 68%.

#### **UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES**

**Endangered and threatened species** - Assess whether the proposed project will impact any threatened or endangered fish, wildlife, plants or aquatic species or any “species of special concern,” or create a barrier to the migration or movement of fish or wildlife. For groundwater, assess whether the proposed project, including impacts on adjacent surface flows, would impact any threatened or endangered species or “species of special concern.”

*Determination:* The property is mostly undeveloped and provides wildlife habitat for some ungulates such as deer and elk but is not considered to be a specific winter game range. The property lacks bear grazing forage and does not provide an adequate prey base for wolves and therefore, does not provide suitable habitat for these species. Potentially dangerous animals may pass through the site and prospective owners of the lots should be made aware of the situation. Lot owners are encouraged to contact FW&P to obtain information on living with wild animals.

**Wetlands** - Consult and assess whether the apparent wetland is a functional wetland (according to COE definitions), and whether the wetland resource would be impacted.

*Determination:* No wetlands are within the project site.

**Ponds** - For ponds, consult and assess whether existing wildlife, waterfowl, or fisheries resources would be impacted.

*Determination:* There are no ponds within the project area.

**GEOLOGY/SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE** - Assess whether there will be degradation of soil quality, alteration of soil stability, or moisture content. Assess whether the soils are heavy in salts that could cause saline seep.

*Determination:* No impact

**VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY/NOXIOUS WEEDS** - Assess impacts to existing vegetative cover. Assess whether the proposed project would result in the establishment or spread of noxious weeds.

*Determination:* The lot owners are responsible for re-vegetation and the control and eradication of noxious weeds on their lots.

**AIR QUALITY** - Assess whether there will be a deterioration of air quality or adverse effects on vegetation due to increased air pollutants.

*Determination:* No impact

**HISTORICAL AND ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES** - Assess whether there will be degradation of unique archeological or historical sites in the vicinity of the proposed project.

*Determination:* A cultural resources survey is up to the property owner since it is private property. Should any archeological site be discovered during construction, work in that area will be suspended until the site can be fully evaluated.

**DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AND ENERGY** - Assess any other impacts on environmental resources of land, water and energy not already addressed.

*Determination:* None

## **HUMAN ENVIRONMENT**

**LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS** - Assess whether the proposed project is inconsistent with any locally adopted environmental plans and goals.

*Determination:* The project is in compliance with Sanders County subdivision regulations.

**ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES** - *Assess whether the proposed project will impact access to or the quality of recreational and wilderness activities.*

*Determination:* There will be no impact to recreation. The project is located outside of any established wilderness area and has no effect on access or wilderness activities.

**HUMAN HEALTH** - *Assess whether the proposed project impacts on human health.*

*Determination:* No impact

**PRIVATE PROPERTY** - *Assess whether there are any government regulatory impacts on private property rights.*

Yes\_\_\_ No x\_\_\_ *If yes, analyze any alternatives considered that could reduce, minimize, or eliminate the regulation of private property rights.*

*Determination:* NA

**OTHER HUMAN ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES** - *For routine actions of limited environmental impact, the following may be addressed in a checklist fashion.*

*Impacts on:*

- (a) Cultural uniqueness and diversity? No
- (b) Local and state tax base and tax revenues? Yes
- (c) Existing land uses? Yes
- (d) Quantity and distribution of employment? No
- (e) Distribution and density of population and housing? Yes
- (f) Demands for government services? Yes
- (g) Industrial and commercial activity? No
- (h) Utilities? Yes
- (i) Transportation? No
- (j) Safety? No
- (k) Other appropriate social and economic circumstances? None

**2. *Secondary and cumulative impacts on the physical environment and human population:***

Secondary Impacts: Increased Population

Cumulative Impacts: Increased Population

3. ***Describe any mitigation/stipulation measures:*** None
4. ***Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives to the proposed action, including the no action alternative, if an alternative is reasonably available and prudent to consider:*** None

*PART III. Conclusion*

1. ***Preferred Alternative:*** As proposed
2. ***Comments and Responses:*** None
3. ***Finding:***  
*Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_ Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required?* No

*If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action:* No significant impacts have been identified, Therefore no EIS is necessary.

*Name of person(s) responsible for preparation of EA:*

*Name:* Rich Russell

*Title:* Water Resources Specialist

*Date:* September 11, 2007